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2. FRANCE

The US will be under increasing pressure to meet the French-imposed 1 April 1967 deadline for evacuation of US personnel and stocks from military bases in France. High-level French officials have recently stressed that continued delays in departure might bring restrictive measures.

The US has not accepted the deadline. While French officials have indicated informally that 1 April is a target rather than an absolute goal, the French Government seems intent on discouraging any slippage. A monthly US forecast of evacuation dates for December did not specify closing dates for some major installations. Moreover, it noted that departure from the large air base at Evreux would be delayed from 31 March, as originally indicated, until 30 June. Upon receipt of this forecast, Paris immediately pressed for speedier action.

France may hope to put the US in the position of having to ask for specific exceptions to the deadline. De Gaulle could then magnanimously allow the US to remain beyond 1 April in a few isolated instances and the US would appear to have accepted the deadline.

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3. BERLIN HOLIDAY PASSES

The East Germans may permit holiday pass visits to East Berlin without an agreement with the West Berlin Senat.

Negotiations for another formal pass agreement began last June, but have been stalled since late October over an East German demand that the Senat agree to terminology that implies recognition of the East German regime. On 7 November the Senat requested another meeting but the East Germans have not responded.

The Senat learned last month that the East Germans had already printed the application forms and passes to be used at Christmas. These probably contain politically objectionable phraseology. On 2 and 3 December, moreover, the East Germans set up between 15 and 20 booths on their side of the Wall at two of the four crossing points used for pass visits last year.

Although a last-minute East German retreat may still make possible a formal agreement, an effort to bypass the Senat and deal directly with the West Berlin people appears more likely. The East Germans, for example, may handle applications and passes at the new booths rather than at the 16 locations in West Berlin used before. Or they may attempt to issue applications and passes at the headquarters of the small West Berlin SED (Communist Party).

In the past, the Senat has reacted negatively to rumors that this organization might issue passes. Visits to East Berlin over Christmas are popular, however, and the West Berlin government might now be reluctant to prevent the SED from issuing passes.

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4. PANAMA

The issue of Panamanian sovereignty over US military installations was resurrected following an incident on 1 December when a Panamanian commercial aircraft made an "emergency" landing (perhaps contrived to create an incident) at the US-leased Rio Hato training area southwest of Panama City.

Leftists and ultranationalists, joining sensationalist news media in a storm of anti-US criticism, called the alleged detention of the plane an affront to Panamanian sovereignty and urged the foreign minister to protest. Despite clarifying statements by US officials, neither the government nor the news media controlled by the oligarchy retracted inaccuracies or placed the incident in its proper perspective. On 6 December Foreign Minister Eleta issued a note which, although not an official "protest," asserted Panama's sovereignty over the Rio Hato area and stated that the US must defer to Panamanian authorities in similar cases in the future.

The Rio Hato affair is another example of the use of such incidents by Panama's elite to divert popular resentment from themselves and direct it against the US. With pressures for a canal settlement likely to increase as active campaigning for the 1968 election gets under way, it will become more difficult for politicians to take a rational position on US-Panamanian relations. The base rights and status-of-forces agreement has been one of the most difficult aspects of the canal treaty settlement currently being negotiated, and the government is making no firm attempt to play down controversial issues while the talks are progressing.

Panamanian dissatisfaction with the course of the canal negotiations could easily be used by the government to heighten tension between the US and Panama in the hope of gaining concessions on a canal treaty.



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